



Connecticut Farm Bureau Association

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The following testimony is submitted on behalf of the Connecticut Farm Bureau, a statewide nonprofit membership organization of over 5,000 families dedicated to farming and the future of Connecticut agriculture.

Senator Meyer, Representative Gentile and Members of the Environment Committee:

SB 00066. AN ACT CONCERNING OUTDOOR WOOD-BURNING FURNACES. The Connecticut Farm Bureau has been involved in the on-going debate over outdoor wood-burning furnaces for several years. It has always been our intention to find ways to adopt cleaner-burning technology advancements while preserving the right of CT residents to utilize wood as a plentiful and affordable renewable energy source. The EPA is in the process of developing federal regulations to address new residential installations of units. The process will likely move away from the voluntary standards of Phase II certification and replace it with mandatory standards that establish emission thresholds that manufacturers must comply with. We understand that the certification process will focus on units less than 350,000 BTUs. CT Farm Bureau believes it is important to also allow larger units (above 350,000 BTUs) that meet the same standards so that farms can utilize clean-burning wood technology to heat greenhouses and other agricultural uses in order to lower energy costs. In addition the Connecticut Farm Bureau wants to make sure that residents who have invested thousands of dollars to install OWFs be allowed to continue to utilize them throughout a reasonable useful life of the unit. If there are demonstrated problems with earlier installations that warrant replacement before the end of the reasonable useful life, the state should provide funds to help owners upgrade their units to the new standards. SB 00066 appears to maintain the current setbacks and stack height requirements in the current CT law and bans the use of treated wood in the units. Whereas this bill as written seems acceptable, we are concerned about efforts to amend the bill to place further restrictions on OWFs.

SB 00069. AN ACT CONCERNING THE FARMLAND RESTORATION AND VACANT PUBLIC LANDS PROGRAMS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE. The Connecticut Farm Bureau supports SB00069 as it allows the Commissioner of Agriculture to reimburse farmers for the cost of farmland restoration plans including those that lease farmland (for at least 5 years) from the state or local municipalities. In addition, it expands the use of restoration funds to include nuisance wildlife fencing and additional incidental land clearing activities. We believe these are important enhancements to Farmland Restoration Program and urge their adoption.

SB 00070. AN ACT CONCERNING THE PRESERVATION OF LANDS UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE. The Connecticut Farm Bureau generally supports SB00070 as it makes it harder to convert land that is owned by the State of CT to non-agricultural uses. We are however concerned by the language that defines "high conservation value" and the potential conflict of using land that has been so designated between agricultural uses and other natural resource priorities. We would prefer to

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have the Commissioner of Agriculture determine what agricultural attributes are to be protected and designate those attributes as "high conservation value" for those properties protected for agricultural use. For the purpose of evaluating state-owned farm properties the ranking criteria used to evaluate potential properties for inclusion in the Farmland Preservation Program should be utilized.

HB 05087. AN ACT CONCERNING THE STEALING OF SHELLFISH. The Connecticut Farm Bureau supports HB05087 as it expands the current rules on stealing oysters to all shellfish.

HB 05088. AN ACT CONCERNING CERTIFICATION FOR CONNECTICUT-GROWN MARKETS AND RESTAURANTS. The Connecticut Farm Bureau supports adoption of HB 05088. The current thresholds for the "Farm Fresh Market" program have proved to be unworkable and as a result there has not been participation in the program. The new thresholds as well as renaming the program to be consistent with the "CT Grown" programs will likely result in better utilization and expand consumer access to "CT Grown" products.